SOLANUM ROEII: A NEW SPECIES FROM CHIAPAS, MEXICO

Donald Ugent and Hugh H. Iltis

Department of Botany, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
and
Department of Botany, University of Wisconsin, Madison

SOLANUM ROEII Ugent et Iltis, sp. nov.

Planta ramosissima; caulis lignosus; ramulis et foliis pubescentibus vel tomentosis cum pilis stellata fulvis, aetate glabrescens; folia simplicia, elliptico vel elliptico-oblonga et obtusa; foliola stipuliformia non visi; inflorescentia pauciflora; pedunculus abbreviatus; pedicelli basi articulati; flores albi; calycis lobi eglandular, ovato-triangulati; corolla stellata; lobi elliptico lanceolati et acuti; fructus globosus, viridis.

Plant woody and much branched; the leaves and young twigs pubescent to tomentose with tawny, stellate hairs, the older branchlets glabrous and covered with thin gray bark; leaves simple and entire, with 4 to 6 pairs of lateral nerves, elliptic to elliptic-oblong, blunt or roundish to slightly emarginate at tip, up to 7.5 cm long and 3.5 cm wide, on petioles ca. 1 cm long; pseudostipular leaves apparently absent; inflorescence few-flowered, the peduncle 1 to 2 mm long; pedicels 15 to 20 mm long; flowers white; calyx lobes eglandular, ovate-triangular, ca. 4 mm long, elongating to ca. 7 mm in fruit; corolla stellate, with elliptic-lanceolate lobes ca. 1 cm in length; anthers terminal-pored, 3.5 mm long; filaments 1 mm long; stigma capitate; fruit globose, green, ca. 1 cm in dia.; seeds flattened, suborbicular to reniform, reticulate-punctate, ca. 4 mm long and 3 mm wide.

Type: MEXICO, Chiapas, 6 km NW of Las Rosas. Dense secondary growth woodland of Quercus, Acacia, Agave, Heliconia, fan palms, in region of tropical deciduous vegetation on NE slope of Valley of Chiapas. Alt. ca. 900 m. Aug. 8, 1965. K. Roe, E. Roe, & S. Mori 1045 (Holotype, WIS).

This new Solanum from the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico represents still another link in a long chain of closely related species (Artenkreis) which stretches from Panama to northern Mexico. Taxonomically, the various members of this closely knit complex belong to Solanum, subgenus Brevantherum (Seithe) D'Arcy. All are non-spiny shrubs which bear simple leaves, stellate hairs, and small, white, stellate corollas.

With the exception of two closely allied species, S. cordavense Sesse & Mocino and S. lignescens Fernald, none of the other species of this subgenus would appear to be easily confused with S. Roeii. Our new species, however, can be readily told apart from S. cordavense, a Central American species ranging from Belize to Costa Rica, by its smaller calyx lobes and less dense covering of hairs over its stems, pedicels and leaves. Moreover, the lower leaf surfaces of S. Roeii are prominently marked with light-colored veins, a feature not borne by S. cordavense.

From S. lignescens, the type of which was collected by Palmer from the hills above Acapulco, Guerrero in 1894, S. Roeii differs in having but 4 to 6 pairs of lateral leaf veins, rather than 7 to 11. Also, our new species has noticeably longer pedicels and shorter peduncles than S. lignescens.

The specific epithet of our plant honors Dr. Keith Roe, outstanding student of Solanum and monographer of Sect. Brevantherum (Brittonia 1967, 1972).

Solanum Roeii Ugent et Iltis. Holotype, University of Wisconsin Herbarium, Madison.